

PATENT  
Atty Docket No. 1387-001/MMM

Remarks

Claims 1-33, 56-82, and 91-104 are in the application. Claims 1, 17, 56, 65, and 91 are in independent form. Reconsideration is requested.

Unselected claims 34-55 and 83-90 have been cancelled. Independent claim 104 is added to provide an independent base claim for elected dependent claims 91-103. Claim 104 includes the subject matter of former base claim 83 and subject matter of the elected independent claims.

Claim 82 is rejected under 35 USC 112, second paragraph, for indefiniteness. The Examiner notes that the term "the timestamp" lacks an antecedent basis. Claim 82 has been amended to correct the informality. Applicants request that this rejection be withdrawn.

Claims 17, 65, and 66 stand rejected under 35 USC 102(e) for anticipation by Vanstone (US Pat. No 6,490,682). Claims 1-5, 8-16, 18, 19, 22-31, 33, 56-64, 67, 68, 70-80, 91-99, 102, and 103 are rejected under 35 USC 103(a) for obviousness over Vanstone (US Pat. No 6,490,682) in view of Pfitzmann. Claims 6 and 7 are rejected under 35 USC 103(a) for obviousness over Vanstone and Pfitzmann, and further in view of Pavlik (US Pat. No. 6,807,633). Claims 20, 21, 32, 69, 81, 82, and 100 are rejected under 35 USC 103(a) for obviousness over Vanstone and Pfitzmann, and further in view of Epstein (US Pat. No. 6,601,172). Applicants respond as follows.

Independent claims 1, 17, 56, and 65 have been amended to clarify that the recited subject matter relates to an authenticating server, for example, which in the language of claim 1 authenticates for a first client a data object that is provided by a second client. Added independent claim 104 recites analogous subject matter. Applicants submit that independent claims 1, 17, 56, 65, and 104, and their respective dependent claims, are patentably distinct from the cited references for the following reasons.

As noted by the Examiner, Vanstone is directed to a log-on verification protocol that provides authentication in an information exchange between a client and a server. "This invention seeks to provides a solution to the problem of server verification by a client." (Vanstone, col. 1, lines 41-42.) The Examiner states that Vanstone describes a

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client as verifying the validity of a signature, rather than the server, and cites Pfitzman as showing server-sided signing and verification. Pfitzman describes general digital signature schemes, including a server-aided verification in which some verification computations are delegated to a server for clients with limited computational capabilities (e.g., smartcards). The Examiner concludes that it would have been obvious to verify the signature at the server.

Claim 1 recites an authentication method in which a data object from one client (a "second client") is authenticated for another client (a "first client") by method steps performed at a server. The method includes the steps of receiving the data object at the server from the second client to the server, generating at the server a signature corresponding to the second client, associating the signature with the data object at the server to create a signed object; delivering the signed object to the first client; and returning the signed object from the first client to the server to authenticate that the signature of the signed object corresponds to the second client. This method allows the server to function as an authenticating intermediary for a data object passed between the first and second clients. Remaining independent claims 17, 56, 65, and 104 recite analogous subject matter.

Applicants submit that the direct log-on authentication of Vanstone, with server-side processing of Pfitzman, does not teach or suggest intermediary server authentication that allows an authenticated data object to be passed between two separate clients. The intermediary server authentication recited in the independent claims can provide authentication of data objects that are passed between clients that do not have direct authentication protocols between them. One use of this invention is illustrated in the application at paragraph [0005]:

Computer-based methods of producing documents are becoming more prevalent. Electronic documents are replacing written contracts, orders, payment instruments, account statements, invoices, and other documents that have historically been signed by a written signature. It is frequently advantageous to have a document that has been produced and is being stored in digital form to have a digital signature applied to it so that the authentication of the signer can later be verified. The digitally-signed electronic document can then be transmitted for processing, without the need for a signed paper instrument.

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The cited references provide a verification protocol that is operable only in direct server/client communication. The direct server/client verification of Vanstone and Pfitzmann provides no basis for the intermediary authentication recited in the claims. The cited references provide no teaching or suggestion of a server that provides authentication for one client on with respect to a different client. Applicants submit, therefore, that the cited references do not teach or suggest the subject matter of 1, 17, 56, 65, and 104, or their dependent claims, and request that the rejections be withdrawn.

For the same reasons, applicants request withdrawal of the rejections of claims 6 and 7 over Vanstone and Pfitzmann, and further in view of Pavlik, and claims 20, 21, 32, 69, 81, 82, and 100 over Vanstone and Pfitzmann, and further in view of Epstein.

Applicants believe the application is in condition for consideration and respectfully request the same.

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Respectfully Submitted,

  
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